

KICKSHAWS

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Kickshaws is being assembled by a series of guest editors during Dave Silverman's sabbatical in 1976. During this year, all contributions and comments should be sent to the editor in Morristown, N.J.

An Earlier Kickshaw

Writer Willard Espy in his book The Game of Words (Grosset & Dunlap, 1971) claimed there are only three common words ending in -dous: HAZARDOUS, STUPENDOUS, and TREMENDOUS. Too late, because the presses were rolling, he realized he had made a horrendous mistake. Recently, syndicated columnist L. M. Boyd noted that his Language Man had no luck so far in finding the fourth of the four -dous words to go with TREMENDOUS, HORRENDOUS, and STUPENDOUS. Mr. Boyd, meet Mr. Espy.

Actually, neither has a leg to stand on -- one might say they are APODOUS. In addition to these words, Webster's (new) New Collegiate lists IODOUS, MOLYBDOUS, PALLADOUS, and VANADOUS. No, dum-dum, we do not mean they are all in the 7th New Collegiate, which neglected to include PALLADOUS. All, however, are in the (old) New Collegiate. Natch, if one digs deep in Web 2 the list may be augmented by over 100 -- our last count was a total of 125. There's even another -endous word to go with Boyd's three: PUDENDOUS.

Espy and Boyd were found wanting.

A Chemistry Lesson

In an earlier Kickshaw we saw -dous words. The last four are chemical words: adjectives meaning pertaining to, containing or composed of the lower valence state of the respective element -- IODINE, MOLYBDENUM, PALLADIUM, and VANADIUM.

It so happens that there are many more elements which end in -dium; but little-known even among chemists is that although they do not form cations by changing -dium to -dous, they have highly irregular forms to describe their unusual valence states: INDIUM to HINDUS, IRIDIUM to IRIDESCENCE, RADIUM to RADIUS, RHODIUM to RHODA, RUBIDIUM to RUBICON, and SCANDIUM to SCANDALOUS.

Although we rather doubt it, it's said the Noble Prize Metals,

GOLD and LEAD, have multiple peculiar forms: GOLDDUST, GOLD-BRICKER, GOLDAMEIR and LEDGE, LEDGER, (archaic) LECHEROUS.

Readers are advised to take this Kickshaw with a grain of SODOMOUS CHOLERA. As logologists, however, don't be guilty of not being true to your field.

Tergiversation

Columnist K. M. Reese, in commenting in the April 5, 1971 Chemical & Engineering News on the Word Ways article of February 1971 entitled "Megalosesquipedalia" (the longest words are chemical names), said, "The Beaman view rests on the thesis that chemical names qualify as words ... " Traitor to his sponsors! Why are names from other fields of knowledge OK but those from one's own area suspect? Let him be required to tabulate all the "chemical names" in Webster's Pocket Dictionary, which includes such common words as OXYGEN, BENZENE, AMMONIUM CHLORIDE, LYSERGIC ACID DIETHYLAMIDE, and DEOXYRIBONUCLEIC ACID.

Better yet, let him write the following poem 1000 times. The 28-letter word is pronounced much as you might expect, except be sure to pronounce the suffixes as three equally-emphasized syllables (-die'-een'-own').

Tetraphenylcyclopentadienone
Is a word, you must agree,
That has a ring that's fancy free
And a rhythm that is really all its own;
Where in all philosophy
Can one hear such harmony
As one finds in chemistry
With tetraphenylcyclopentadienone?
At work in my laborat'ry
I often think how fine 'twould be
To synthesize a compound that is now unknown;
Yet, somehow, unconsciously
I turn to Volume Twenty-three
"Organic Syntheses" (Wiley)
And tetraphenylcyclopentadienone.

That 28-letter word wasn't so bad, now was it? After all, long words are nothing but a string of letters you know.

Chain Letters

In the May 1975 Kickshaws, Dave Silverman noted that the multiplicity of 2-letter words ensures that many long words may be divided into chains of 2-letter links. The challenge was to find the longest Websterian words (123456...) yielding unlinked chains (12,34,56,... are words, but one or more of 23,45,67,... are not) and linked chains (12,23,34,45,56,... are all legit).

Tom Pulliam, restricting himself to Web 2, submitted URETERO-CYSTANASTOMOSIS for the unlinked winner. (Are medical terms really words?) Noting that his word was disqualified only by CY from being the champion of the links, Tom even allowed himself Web 3 2-letter words but couldn't hit beyond the 19th.

A similar problem, of the unlinked variety, is to use chemical symbols for elements to form elements: ARSENIC is both Ar-Se-Ni-C and Ar-Se-N-I-C. Frankly, we like TIN-TIN-Na-B-U-La-Ti-O-N, despite its tinny sound.

Dave Silverman wonders if 2-letter postal abbreviations for states could be arranged into appropriate words. He notes one can come close to an abbreviated state with Ne-Wy-Or-Ky. Howzabout Websterian words that are stately?

By the way, Tom, you unintentionally also found the linked chain to beat -- for CY is a Web 2 word. Just look in the right place.

Hard-to-Find Words

Hard-to-Find Words, now appearing serially in Word Ways, contains many words of logological interest. Here are some plurals that don't look right. But they are. They all appear in boldface in Web 3 under the reference entries:

BOUNTIFULS lady bountiful	LIFES still life
DORYS john dory	PRYS paul pry
ELSES red els	SALLYs aunt sally
FRIEDS french fry (fried)	SPUNS french spun
HARRYS handsome harry	VITAEs lignum vitae

For those addicted to grass, there are

BEACHGRASS	BRISTLEGRASS	SNAKEGRASS
BEARDGRASS	LOVEGRASS	STARGRASS
BENTGRASS	MEADOWGRASS	TONGUEGRASS

Amazingly, none may be found as shown in its expected alphabetical position. Except for SNAKEGRASS (which inexplicably is hyphenated) all appear in their own entries as two words.

So what's the big deal? Believe you us, there is a difference depending on what you do.

Dash It, Compact It

For those readers (and Merriam-Webster editors) who believe there is no difference among two words, a hyphenated word, and a solid word, you are invited to check GLASS EYE, GLASS-EYE and GLASSEYE which are entirely different words: artificial eye (or blindness in horses), African warbler, and freshwater pike or perch. And then there are RED EYE, RED-EYE and REDEYE which have a variety of mean-

ings but mainly refer to railroad signal, cheap whiskey, and fish of the bass family. True, CATCH UP and CATCH-UP are closely related, but how about CATCHUP? And ROLL IN (go to bed), ROLL-IN (play in field hockey), and ROLLIN (usu cap R, from ROLLIN FILM, film of liquid helium II) should serve to convince you.

Take care you don't slip.

In Words

The past holiday season saw a major U.S. corporation proclaiming the slogan "Enjoy Holidays Safely". The thought was commendable but the message deplorable. Do enjoy and safely really belong together? Could one enjoy them unsafely? Might not one despise them safely? The current fad of using words such as enjoy for have, and viable for another, and (supply your own examples) will soon lead to sentences

The winner will enjoy two weeks in Philadelphia
Our local team enjoyed its third defeat in a row Saturday
This is a viable route for the new highway
Many people consider suicide a viable solution to problems

It wasn't only W. C. Fields who joked about Philadelphia, let us tell you.

A Philadelphia Story

The Delaware Valley was mystified last fall by a radio station posing this question: "What is a word ending in -gry, not ANGRY or HUNGRY, which is an adjective describing the state of the world today?" We are inclined to believe the poser did not put the restrictions on the word, thinking that there is only one word ending in -gry, unaware there are two common words.

Any logologist worth his salt would immediately turn to the Air Force Reverse Dictionary. And we did in just a few shakes. But to no avail! In Web 2 are AGGRY, ANGRY, UNANGRY, HUNGRY, AHUNGRY, and ANHUNGRY. These are clearly trivial. AGGRY is an adjective, used in the combo AGGRY BEAD, defined as a glass bead found in Ghana and England. (We sure wish someone would research them! Why in such outlandish places?)

If there be a viable word, it could be very new. Are there any readers out there from the younger generation?

Being old salts we turned to The Oxford English Dictionary. Opening it at random we found what we were looking for: RANCOROUSLY - RANDOM and RANDOM - RANE. This not answering the question, we resorted to the time-tested scientific method of reading each page. Just before we lost our sight entirely, we found MEAGRY, an adjective meaning "having a meagre appearance".

This illustrates that dictionaries may have words you don't expect

and don't have those you do. The OED (and others) fails to list a word used earlier, SODOMOUS, which should teach you a lesson. It does list SODOMETROUS, clearly a bad word. Any others?

Arithmetrogram

Ever hear of an arithmetrogram? Not surprising if you didn't, since we just made it up. Now that you are in a bad mood, can you discover what the following 14-letter words from Web 3 have in common?

CHINCHERINCHEE	INSTANTIATIONS	SANITATIONISTS
IMMINENTNESSES	OPPOSITIONISTS	

Hint: the lower level is trivial and the higher level doesn't exist.

Starry-Eyed

What words are in or out of which dictionary is a subject that could occupy all the pages of Word Ways forever. Remember in an earlier Kickshaw we mentioned three different New versions of Webster's Collegiate. Here are some entries and nonentries from various Merriam-Webster works:

	Web 2	NCol ¹	Web 3	7Col ²	NCol ³	Pocket
Big Dipper	yes	no	no	no	yes	yes
Dog Star	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	no
North Star	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

1. the (old) New Collegiate (1949 - 1961)
2. the 7th New Collegiate (1963 - 1972)
3. the (new) New Collegiate (1973 -)

Even if a word is in a dictionary that's no guarantee it will be entered properly.

Definitely Defined

Didja ever look up UNMENTIONABLE in Web 3? Entry 2a says "unmentionables pl: TROUSERS (chaste young men in checked ~s - Cyril Pearl)". Somebody is putting us on. And we are not unmentionables. Is it Web or Cyril?

The Web 3 entry big cat (see also little cat) says it is "a hand recognized in some poker games that consists of king, queen, jack, ten, and eight, contains no pairs, includes cards from two or more suits, and ranks next below a flush". We don't know about you, but we worry about a poker hand having K-Q-J-10-8 that "contains no pairs". So what else is new?

Many logologists delight in words having highly specific meanings that one doubts anyone could ever work into a conversation. These words, however, look as though they are esoteric. The next time you

have a spare minute look up CASE OIL in your Web 3. Haven't got a minute? OK, it's defined as "kerosene contained in 5-gallon tin cans packed by twos in wooden cases". What if: gasoline vs kerosene? 4-gallon vs 5-gallon? steel vs tin? bottles vs cans? threes vs twos? cardboard vs wooden? carryalls vs cases?

With all the ins and outs of language, sometimes we don't know which way to turn.

Definition Right In - Language Left Out

Dmitri Borgmann has assembled an ingenious quiz that exploits the concept of translingual lookalikes. Ten groups of five "English" words are given, together with their definitions translated into English; preceding these groups is a list of ten languages. Your task, if you decide to accept the assignment, is to match the languages with the groups.

Languages: Dutch, German, Hawaiian, Italian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Slovak, Swedish, Welsh

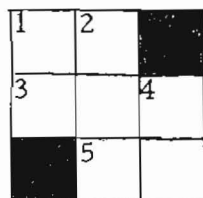
- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 FIRED = be separated, divided
HARES = a house ghost
HENNA = filled with joy
POLKA = a watch chain
SUSAN = the white lily | 6 CHUTE = the kickoff in football
LASSO = dissolute
PASTA = briefcase
SALVO = omitted, excepted
VELAR = to watch over |
| 2 ATLAS = satin
NAVAL = rush
PESKY = on foot
SEVER = north
TOPIC = fireman | 7 BINGE = heap
GLASS = ice cream
LATER = behavior
PLUMP = coarse
TAPPER = brave |
| 3 BERTH = beautiful, valuable
CURIO = to waste, to pine
OFFER = implements, tools
PARCH = respect, reverence
UNION = straight, direct | 8 BEVEL = command
DRIFT = passion
LASTER = slander
PUMMEL = yokel
TROTS = pride |
| 4 HOPE = death
LAMA = a forest tree
MAKE = to die
NONE = to snore
PANE = to reply | 9 ALONE = halo
BURRO = butter
EMPIRE = to fill up
SALVO = condition, reservation
STARE = to be, to live |
| 5 CABER = buttock, rump
DANIEL = the fallow deer
FLORET = a fencing foil
PIERS = breast, bosom
TOPIC = to drown, to melt | 10 ALTER = age
BALD = soon
BUNTER = more multicolored
HAPPEN = to seize greedily
TASTE = piano key |

Dmitri didn't furnish us the pronunciations of these words; so it's hard to use them in sound ways, for example.

Syllabic Crosswords

Under "More About Syllables" in the November Kickshaws, Dave Silverman raised the possibility of using syllables in crossword puzzles. Regular N. Y. Times Sunday Magazine crossword fans are aware of a puzzle four or five months ago entitled "Paging Mr. Tell" in which all the letters ARROW appeared in single squares (shown as → in the solution) and "Biting the Bullet" a month or so later in which POINT (shown as ·) was similarly treated.

In attempting to construct a complete syllabic crossword one must choose among sight (dictionary syllabification) and sound (phonetics) and a hybrid. None of the problems these ordinarily entail occurs in the following two puzzles using Dave's suggested diagram. The first is nearly trivial; the second may require some checking in Web 3.



Across

1. Amplifying or broadcasting
3. Baseball statistic
5. You may talk (in shortwave)

Across

1. Social medical problem
3. Weed killer or plasticizer
5. Sixty in Rome

Down

1. Good will profession
2. Basic principle
4. Measure of ability

Down

1. With fuze, proximity
2. Special law degree
4. Military installation shop

Further elaborations on this subject will appear in a later Kickshaw herein.

A Later Kickshaw

Further elaborations on this subject include the transmutation of elements of words to create new words. The rules are to change a syllable at a time preserving dictionary divisions (pronunciation doesn't count, spelling does) to change one word to another. Responding to Dave Silverman's August and November Kickshaws on this topic, Joan Jurow of Wanaque, New Jersey, avoided the SECANT trap in transmuting SECOND to MINUTE by using SECTOR instead, but then after CANTOR lost her musical timing and footing in going to CANTED. A viable route is to CANCHA, and then MINCHA gets her home in a minute. She quickly regained the pace and forthrightly found YELLOW - YELLER - PURLER - PURPLE in Web 2. No, you damyankees, that second word is not "one who yells", which splits the wrong way, but a dialectical variation of YELLOW, as in HIGH YELLER, still another example of a non-dictionary entry, despite the appearance of YELLER.